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REMARKS

Claims 7 – 11 are pending and were addressed in the Office Action. Claim 7 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b); claims 8 - 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a). The rejection of claim 7 is believed to be overcome by the foregoing amendments and the rejection of claims 8 – 11 is traversed, for the reasons stated herein.

Rejection of claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. §102

The Examiner rejects claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by European Patent Document No. EP 1 227 448 (hereinafter, "EP'448"). In response, claim 7 has been amended by the addition thereto of the limitation previously set forth in claim 8. Thus, the stated ground of rejection has been rendered moot.

Rejection of Claims 8 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claim 8 (the limitations of which have now been combined into claim 7) and claim 10 stand rejected as allegedly being unpatentable over EP'448 in view of United States Patent No. 4,302,907 to Canals et al. (hereinafter, "Canals"). The Examiner cites EP'448 for disclosing a safe which, as shown in Fig. 2 thereof, includes an outer door 18' overlapping an inner door 20', the inner door having a cutout portion. Canals is cited for disclosing a door assembly comprising inner and outer doors (1,2) and a locking mechanism by which a single mechanical key can unlock either or both doors. The Examiner asserts that it would be obvious to modify the safe of EP'448 by providing a single lock mechanism as taught by Canals.

Claim 8 (and claim 10 depending therefrom), set forth the limitation now in claim 7, that the safe lock is capable on some occasions of actuating both the outer safe door locking mechanism and the inner safe door locking mechanism, and is capable on other occasions of actuating only the outer door locking mechanism. The Applicant respectfully submits that this limitation is not shown or suggested by the applied references. In particular, the single lock mechanism shown by Canals only permits opening both the inner door and the outer door together simultaneously (see, e.g., Figs. 8 and 10 and column 5, lines 50-55). Canals does not show a single lock mechanism that provides for opening only the outer door on some occasions, as was recited in claim 8 (now in claim 7). Claims 7 and 10 are therefore both novel and nonobvious over the applied combination of EP'448 and Canals.

Rejection of Claims 9 under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claim 9 stands rejected as allegedly being unpatentable over EP'448 in view of Canals as applied to claim 8, and further in view of United States Patent No. 5,143,430 to Craven et al (hereinafter, "Craven").

Craven is cited for disclosing the concept of using different locked doors of a container to control access to different parts of the container for different employees.

Claim 9 is allowable because it depends from an allowable base claim and also because it provides an additional, independent basis of patentability, i.e., different keys that open either only the outer door or, optionally both doors, respectively.

Craven does not appear to teach the selective grant of access to different parts of a safe to different keys, as the Examiner suggests. Rather, Craven discloses a vending machine having two doors (18, 22) that can be opened together. The outer door 18 comprises the face of the machine, while the inner door carries the lighting, control panel elements, etc., that needed for the face of the machine and which are stored between the doors. The inner door also serves to close the refrigerated compartment of the machine. The doors are held together by a spring latch 12 so that when the outer door is opened, the inner door opens with it to protect the circuitry etc. between them, and to prevent the inner door from banging against the frame of the machine while the doors are open (see column 3, lines 8-28). However, the doors may easily be separated should access to the control panel elements etc. be desired. Nowhere is there a suggestion that access to the refrigerated compartment be limited to selected employees.

In order to establish prima facie obviousness, the cited prior art references must teach or suggest all of the claim limitations and the prior art must suggest the combination of those limitations to produce the claimed invention.

As mentioned above, Canals offers the option of opening only the inside door (from the inside) or both doors (from the outside). Craven, on the other hand, requires that both doors be opened together, from the outside. Accordingly, no combination of the teachings of these reference leads to a configuration that permits the opening of only the outside door under certain circumstances such as by a particular key, as recited in claim 9.

Furthermore, Craven does not teach the selective grant of access to different parts of a safe to different key holders, as the Examiner suggests. Rather, anyone who can open the double door disclosed by Craven can separate the inner door from the outer door. Nor is such a suggestion provided in the other cited references. Therefore, the applied art fails to teach or suggest a safe as defined in claim 9, i.e., one in which one key opens only the outer door

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while another key opens both doors. Accordingly, claim 9 is believed to be patentable distinct from the asserted prior art.

Rejection of claim 11 under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claim 11 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over EP'448 in view of United States Patent No. 5,787,819 to Fumanelli (hereinafter, "Fumanelli"). Claim 11 is allowable at least because it depends from a base claim that is allowable for the reasons given above.

Each of the stated objections and grounds of rejection have been addressed or traversed. Accordingly, reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims in view of the foregoing is respectfully requested. No fee is believed due with the filing of this Response. However, if a fee is due, Applicant authorizes the payment of any additional charges that may be necessary to maintain the pendency of the present application to the undersigned attorney's Deposit Account No. 503342.

Respectfully submitted,

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